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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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SIPDIS

STATE PASS BBG
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/28): THE FAILURE OF FATAH's
PARTY CONVENTION

Main Stories:

The dailies lead coverage with a UN report revealing that Israel is issuing hundreds of house demolition orders to Palestinians in area C, areas in the Palestinian Territory that are under Israeli administrative and military control and include Israeli settlements, military and "state" lands. The coverage highlights that the demolitions would leave, "thousands of Palestinians homeless." The meeting between Palestinian President Abbas and Hamas officials at the Muqata'a presidential compound in Ramallah on May 26 is front page news. The Hamas delegation carried a letter from Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails who called for unity among the Palestinian leadership, papers note. The Hamas delegation included former Deputy Prime Minister Naser Addin Ash-Sha'ir, Sheikh Hamid Al-Baytawi and Samir Abu 'Aysha.

The three dailies report extensively on an Israeli military operation in the West Bank city of Qalqilya on May 27. The Israeli military arrested five people and injured eight, according to reports.

Ma'an news agency carries an exclusive report on rumors that Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad will soon reshuffle the cabinet of the, "Palestinian caretaker government." Fayyad will meet with Azzam Al-Ahmad, head of the Fatah block in the Palestinian Legislative Council to discuss the planned changes, Ma'an reports.

Al-Quds runs a German wire DPA story about PLO negotiator Erekat denouncing an Israeli plan for a future state of Palestine, presented as part of on-going negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Erekat stresses that peace with Israel, "will be based on 1967 borders." The story adds that "Secretary Rice will be

visiting the region on the tenth of the coming month."

Al-Quds daily and Ma'an news agency preview the announcement of U.S. funding assistance to the Jenin Governorate. The paper reports that Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad, U.S. Consul General Jake Walles, and the USAID Country Director will visit the West Bank city of Jenin on May 28 for the announcement. The coverage (incorrectly) highlights that the aid will come in the form of direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The graduation ceremony of Palestinian Authority National Security Forces in Jordan on May 27 wins positive coverage in a 3/4 page article on Al Quds' second page. The article highlights comments by US Security Coordinator General Dayton praising the security forces and stressing U.S. commitment to the peace process. General Dayton states that the security training symbolizes cooperation between the U.S., Palestinians and Jordan. The article also quotes Palestinian Interior Minister Al-Yahya stating that, "our ultimate goal is peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Veteran columnist Hani Habib opines in independent Al-Ayyam under the title, "Revolutionary Council... and Fayyad's Government" (05/28): "The 25th Fatah [party] convention that just concluded could have been the most important and critical convention of all, since it was held in troubled times with Fatah facing difficult circumstances: political division between Ramallah and Gaza; the

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failure of on-going negotiations with the Israelis and continued Israeli attacks.... [Instead] the leaders focused on a minor point that should have not been added to the agenda... [Palestinian Prime Minister] Fayyad's Government... as if Fayyad's Government was the reason for the fall of Gaza to Hamas, and as if Fayyad's Government is an obstacle to Fatah returning to Gaza... No doubt there are aspects of Fayyad's government that could be improved and changed, but...these issues... don't justify re-distributing the cake [dissolving and reforming the Government] to cater to the desires of some in Fatah's leadership..."

¶2. Al-Quds independent daily's editorial page opens with a piece entitled, "Jerusalem and the policy of demolition, again" (05/28): "If the reports that the Jerusalem municipality intends to issue hundreds of demolition orders... is true, it further proves that Israeli authorities and ministries are continuing a policy that dates back to 1967, to make life insufferable for Palestinians in the city, in order to make the majority of Jerusalem residents Jewish... the Arab and Palestinian existence in the Holy City [that is holy to] both Muslims and Christians, is under constant threat. It is about time that Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims start paying attention to the situation and make it a priority in their peace efforts."

WALLES